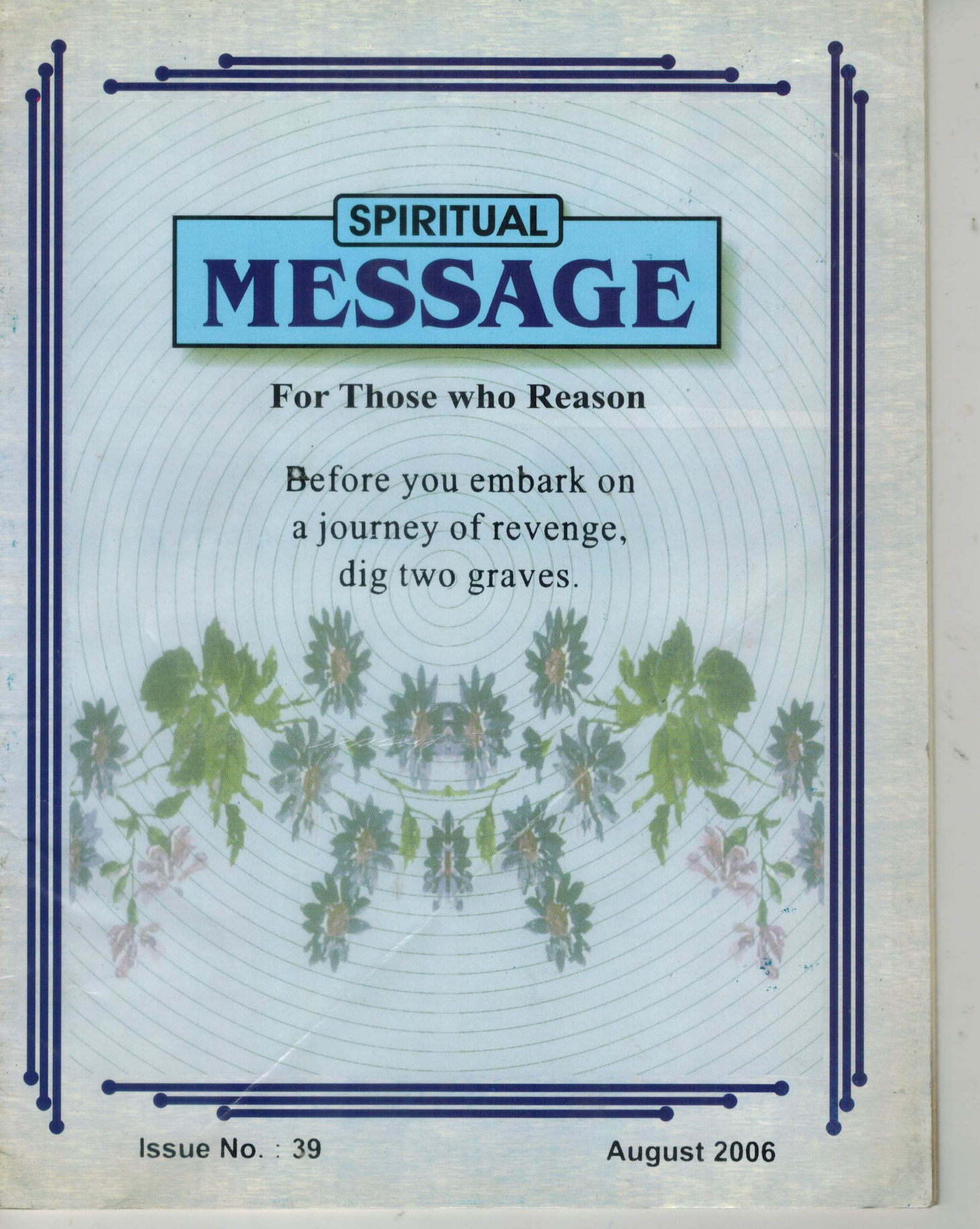




SPIRITUAL MESSAGE

For Those who Reason

Before you embark on
a journey of revenge,
dig two graves.

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From The Editor's Desk.....

A friend sent SMS to me as follow:

"The artist who drew picture of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has died in fire, he was burnt alive. Denmark govt. is hiding the news. plz spread it."

I do not understand what are we achieving by all these futile, nonproductive activities. In the first place the cartoonist who drew the cartoon certainly did not have the purpose of deriding the prophet. The prophet is far above in his stature to be hurt or insulted by this uncalled for act by the artist. In any case it is beyond him to hurt the great personality of prophet.

His purpose if taken in the extreme sense would have been to hurt Muslim feeling which he very much succeeded when you look at the reaction of common Muslims around the world. The Muslims burnt, killed, & destroyed confirming more convincingly the stereotype image of the Muslims. The saner element did speak but their voices were muffled by the media who were gleefully shooting the violence and highlighting the frustration of Muslims.

End result : Muslims are still looked upon as stereo type since the day of white Man's burden.

When are we going to mature? When are we going to follow the example of the prophet in such situation. The seerah (Life of Prophet) is full of his reaction to people ridiculing him and abusing him.

By Sunnah (practice of the prophet) do we mean only keeping beard and cap. Or does Sunnah goes beyond that.

Think my brothers think.

Haroon Shaikh

Spiritual Unity

Man's greatest need today is to be shown the path of spiritual unity. There is no other way to eliminate the disharmony existing in present day society which has resulted in so many intractable problems. It is generally said that in present times, the world has assumed the form of a global village. But this is only half the truth. Modern technology and communications have, of course, greatly reduced distance across the world. But the closeness thus produced is of a purely physical nature. Modern technology may have bridged certain gaps, bringing the external world closer together, but the task of bringing unity into the internal world has yet to be accomplished.

What is spiritual unity? Let us take a very simple example. When you live in a crowded settlement, the walls all around give you a sense of limitation. You experience the fiction of living in close contact with others and you suffer from mental tension. Later, when you emerge from that dense human settlement into open, natural surroundings you immediately feel that your tension has evaporated and you have once again become serene. You feel that you have joined a limitless universality. The feeling of separateness is replaced by an all-pervasive feeling of unity. You immediately become part of a world where there are no boundaries. A sense of universality prevails.

We have all had this experience at one time or another. It shows us what spiritual unity is. It is, in fact, the raising of one's existence to a higher plane. The moment you achieve this, you feel you are emerging from a limited world to become a citizen of an unlimited world. Disunity now disappears, giving way to unity all around.

Although, physically, all human beings appear to be different, spiritually they are one. It is as if spiritual unity between human beings already exists, it does not have to be externally imposed. We have only to make people aware of its existence. Once the outer, artificial veils are removed, what remains will be pure spiritually.

In reality, the various sets of circumstances that confront man in this world lead to drawing of different veils over man's natural propensities. For instance, the veil of material greed produces self-centredness; the veil of jealousy causes him to see himself as being separate from others; the veil of prejudice causes him to discriminate between human beings, and so on.

These veils, in fact, tend to block man's natural urge towards spiritual unity. What is required is to remove these artificial veils in order that the true, inner reality be brought into focus. The aim of all religions, basically, is to encourage this spiritual unity within man and between man and man. No religion is at variance with another so far as this goal is concerned. The language in which this is set forth may vary from one religion to another, but, without doubt, the main concern of all religions is to produce

spiritual unity within and between all human beings. Without spiritual unity, there is little hope of creating peace and harmony throughout the world. And where there is no peace and harmony, the dream of human progress will for ever remain elusive.

Now, what is Islam's contribution to spiritual unity? The subject is too vast for more than just a few basic points to be briefly touched on.

The 'Unity of God

The most important factor in Islam's contribution is its concept of monotheism-of there being only one God (2:163). According to Islam, God, or the ultimate reality of this universe is only-called Allah in Islam. It is implicit in the concept of the oneness of Godhead that differences and multiplicity would appear to exist in reality, yet there is an underlying unity.

In this way the concept of divine unity engenders spiritual unity. All human beings are one, because they are the servants of one God. All human beings are God's family. God is indeed the greatest reality of the universe. And when it is acknowledged that there is only one greatest reality, it is but natural that all other creation should acquire the character of unity.

The 'Unity of Nature

The Qur'an states that "There is no changing in God's creation." (30:30) According to the Prophet of Islam 'every child is born with an upright nature.' (Al-Bukhari) We learn from this that unity is found among all human beings at the level of nature and creation. Nature forms the common constituent in the creation of human beings, just as the atom forms the common constituent in all the varied objects of nature in the physical world. That is to say that the same unity which exists in the external world at the physical level, has existed among human beings at the spiritual level from the outset.

But man tends at times to be oblivious of his own nature. This is no less true in the sphere of unity. Today people are unaware of their spiritual potential. In such a situation, the easiest way to bring about spiritual unity is to make men aware of that potential. The moment they became aware of it, spiritual unity will come into existence of its own accord.

The 'Unity of Mankind

The Qur'an says, "O Men, have fear of your Lord, who created you from a single soul. From that soul He created its mate, and through them, He scattered the earth with countless men and women." (4:1)

This shows that men and women have been created from the same substance. Their being physically

one, of necessity, demands their spiritual oneness.

Making a similar point, the Prophet Muhammad said that all human beings are brothers (Abu Dawud). This gives rise to the concept of a common brotherhood, and without doubt, it is this sense of brotherhood which generates the strongest feeling of oneness and togetherness among different people. That is to say that when all human beings in this world are virtually blood brothers, they must, as this concept necessarily demands, live as brothers in spirit too. Any other way of living is a deviation from the reality.

I should like to refer here to an incident which illustrates this point. In 1893, Swami Vivekananda went to Chicago to participate in the Parliament of Religions. As the Encyclopedia Britannica puts it, his was a 'Sensational appearance.' (15/623) On that occasion all the speakers at the conference followed the common practice of addressing the audience as "Ladies and gentlemen." But when Swami Vivekananda took the stage, he addressed his hearers as "Sisters and brothers of America." No sooner were the words out of his mouth than the hall resounded with a long burst of applause. Of all the delegates at the conference, Swamiji received the greatest ovation.

The reason for this was that the form of address, "Ladies and gentlemen" produces a sense of alienation and strangeness, whereas the phrase "Sisters and Brothers" introduces a note of closeness and familiarity. By using this phrase. Swami Vivekananda touched a cord in the hearts of those of different creeds and colours. Their natural feeling of unity was awakened, and then what ensued fulfilled the best of expectations. All of sudden, the gaps between them were bridged. They all began to feel themselves what they really were, and for that moment, physical divisions disappeared and were replaced by a rare spiritual unity.

Seeing an Advantage Amidst Disadvantages

After attaining to prophethood, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lived in Makkah for thirteen years. This was the most difficult period of his life: only a few of the Makkans believed in him. While the majority—especially the leaders—put up stiff opposition to his ideas. They created all kinds of hardship for him and his companions, even killing some of them; placed a total boycott on him along with his family; deprived him of tribal protection, and resolved to kill the Prophet himself, in order to wipe out Islam forever etc.

In those days the circumstances appeared to be extremely disadvantageous. It was a tribal age. It was held that the actual power of an individual lay in his male child, and since the Prophet had no son, his opponents used to call him '*abtar*' (rootless), that is, he had no future. In these apparently desperate circumstances, the Prophet replied: "God has promised me a town which will swallow up all other towns, people call it Yathrib, but it is Madinah." (*Muwatta* Imam Malik, 641).

What in essence he was saying was that God had decreed that he leave Makkah for another town, a town which would form the centre of his mission and which would then become so powerful as to "swallow up" all other towns. This was a figurative way of saying that all the nations of the world would surrender to it. This observation appeared strange, coming as it did from one who had become persona non grata in his own home town, Makkah, and who was now apparently living in the most straitened circumstances.

When the Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madinah, he did not even have a pair of shoes on his feet; hiding himself in this state from the Makkan leaders he reached Madinah. Called Yathrib in those days, was a town attached with no importance. However in that same Arabia where Makkah had become so inhospitable to him, Madinah proved to be quite the reverse. Almost all its inhabitants entered the fold of Islam, and moreover, the Muslims scattered outside the periphery began to settle within the town. In this way, Madinah became a powerful centre of Islam. Within the space of a few years, his mission flourished there, then it spread to all the other towns in Arabia. Ultimately, the whole of Arabia entered the fold of Islam.

Given the distressing nature of the circumstances in Makkah, it took great insight on the part of the

Prophet to see what the future held for him in Madinah, which was situated at a distance of 300 miles from Makkah. The fact that he foresaw a great future there is proof of his quite remarkable vision.

Apparently, the inhabitants of both the towns, Makkah and Madinah, were idolators, yet there was a basic difference between the two: in Makkah, people's material interests were linked with idolatry, whereas, for the Madinans, idolatry was only an ancestral heritage; it had no other significance.

Due to the shortage of water in Makkah, agriculture and horticulture did not exist there. Idolatry, however, provided one of the greatest sources of the townspeople's livelihood. The Makkans had placed in the Kabah idols numbering 360, belonging to all the Arabian tribes. These Arabian tribes used to visit Kabah to worship their idols where they also offered devotional presents. Due to their visit in great numbers the business in Makkah prospered. By the visit of these devotees Makkans benefited in almost the same manner as countries benefit nowadays from the visit of tourists on a large scale. Furthermore, since the Makkans were the custodians of this idolatrous system, they had come to acquire the position of political leadership of the whole of Arabia. Abandoning idolatry, therefore, appeared to them to be synonymous with the collapse of their politics and economics.

Whereas the situation in Madinah was quite different. There was water and fertile soil. By means of agriculture and horticulture, its inhabitants easily managed to secure their livelihood. Therefore, they were not afraid that if they abandoned idolatry for monotheism, their economy would be ruined. That explains the difference in the response from the people belonging to the two cities. Where the Makkans vigorously opposed the call of monotheism given by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) the Madinans, soon after their first introduction to the religion of monotheism, abandoned idol worship and accepted Islam without any hesitation.

To understand this difference between Makkah and Madinah and to judge that Madinah rather than Makkah would provide the strongest ladder to progress called for keen perception. This assessment made by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is a living proof of the profundity of his vision, and is literally testified to by history.

The Most Powerful Weapon

The period in which the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born was one of war and conflict. Throughout the world the sword was regarded as the sign of power. The Arabs had a saying: The greatest check of war is war. In this connection the Prophet observed: "God grants to non-violence what he does not grant to violence." (*Al-Tirmidhi*)

In the conditions prevailing fifteen hundred years ago such observations seemed extraordinary. Such sentiments were so highly at odds with the times that words of this nature could be uttered only by one whose mind had not been moulded by his immediate circumstances, but had been inspired rather by some higher source of knowledge. Both the initial as well as the later period of Islam testify completely to the principle of inspiration.

During the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) the Quraysh, who enjoyed the leadership of Arabia, turned so hostile to him that they went to the extent of waging war against him. According to the books of *seerah*, the Quraysh wanted to embroil him in minor or major battles on more than eighty occasions. But the Prophet did his best not to engage in hostilities by adopting a peaceful policy. For instance, on the occasion of the Ahzab encounter, the Prophet set up a buffer in the form of a trench between him and his enemies. Then on the occasion of Hudaibiya, when it came to making a peace treaty with the enemy, the Prophet, accepted all the conditions set by them.

During the 23 year period of his prophethood, the Prophet, physically encountered his antagonists only on three occasions—at Badr, Uhud and Hunayn, where conflict had become totally unavoidable. Each of these three engagements lasted for only half a day. This means that the Prophet fought for only one and a half days throughout his life, with the total casualties amounting to not more than 130 from both sides. The winning over of such an aggressive and belligerent people with so little bloodshed had been possible only because the Prophet always used to lay stress on the power of peace.

Arabia had been conquered during the lifetime of the Prophet. The wars that took place in this process took a toll of less than one hundred and fifty people. This revolution brought about by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was indeed a bloodless revolution. And this bloodless revolution became possible only because he acted on his belief in the power of peace.

In the later centuries of Islam, too, this peace formula was followed. That is why Islam achieved

such great successes. One prominent example of this matter is provided by an event which took place in the thirteenth century. During this period the barbaric Mongol tribes rose from Turkistan and devastated the entire Muslim empire right from Samarkand to Aleppo. The grand Abbasid caliphate vanished altogether.

In those days the Muslims' political and military power had so greatly weakened that the saying spread among them that if you were told that the Mongols had been defeated, you should not believe it. It was in this situation that the Islamic policy of peace performed a miracle. Muslim men and Muslim women rose to the occasion, engaging themselves in peaceful *da'wah* work. The result was miraculous, within a period of 50 years the scene was completely changed. In the words of the Qur'an (41:34), the enemies had been turned into close friends. The majority of the Mongols had been brought into the fold of Islam.

"The Religion of Muslims had conquered where their arms had failed." (*The Preaching of Islam*, by T.W. Arnold) As another historian has put it: "The conquerors had accepted the religion of the conquered."

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) held that the power of peace was far greater than the power of violence, and on many occasions, he and his followers successfully put this into practice. As a result this concept of peace, as opposed to violence, influenced the course of events at the time and continued to have an impact on later generations. In present times this thinking has assumed the status of a permanent social philosophy. Many prominent thinkers are its advocates. For instance, it was this principle of peaceful activism on which Mahatma Gandhi based his movement of non-violence and with this power of non-violence the freedom movement successfully achieved its target. Then it was this same principle by which the South African leader Nelson Mandela became successful in his political movement in support of the blacks against the whites.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born in the second half of the sixth century AD. It was an age of constant skirmishing. In those days people resorted to violence, regardless of the issue, for they knew of no other solution to their problems. In such an atmosphere the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) declared that the power of peace was far greater than the power of violence. This peaceful activism could have been understood only by one whose vision was so profound as to enable him to penetrate appearances in order to see reality, one of rare insight, able to penetrate the present and see the future.

As we know in present times the invention and use of the latest weapons of war have only increased the destructiveness of war or violence. In no way do they herald success or victory for anyone. On the other hand, advances in modern science and technology, e.g. today's communications systems, have to a hitherto unimaginable extent, proved strongly supportive of the peaceful method.

These extraordinary possibilities which lay hidden in the darkness of the future fifteen hundred years ago required an exceptional vision. This observation of the Prophet serves, undoubtedly, as a vital proof of this vision.

The Virtues of Dependability

During a recent visit to Europe, Habib Bhai from Hyderabad purchased a camera from a shop at Lausanne in Switzerland, at a cost of about Indian rupees 5000. Before long he realized he had made a mistake. He could have bought it in Saudi Arabia much cheaper—for about Rs 3000, and he had been planning to visit Saudi Arabia on his way back to India. He decided to return the camera, but was at a loss to know what he should say to the shopkeeper. Still, he could not resist the idea of going to the shop and trying his luck. He went up to the saleswoman at the counter and asked her for a refund on the camera. Much to his astonishment, the lady did not even ask him why he wanted to return it. All she asked was: "Do you want the money in Indian or American currency?" She handed him a slip to take over to another counter where he would receive his money back. The money was immediately refunded as if it made no difference to the shopkeepers whether they had money or goods.

The reason that the camera was taken back without demur was that the shopkeepers were sure that before long another customer would come along and buy it. Their article was of dependable quality: If one person did not require it, another would.

In the later centuries of Islam, too, this peace formula was followed. That is why Islam achieved

Creation Plan of God

The Universe made by God is so vast that, despite the enormous progress made by human beings in their attempts to fathom the universe, many of its secrets still remain unknown. The planet earth, made by God as part of the cosmos was and still is unique in the entire universe, in that it has been endowed with an atmosphere and all the other factors which are essential to make it habitable for man.

After bringing into existence a favourable world in the form of the earth, God created the first man Adam and his feminine counterpart, Eve. Although the precise date of this event is unknown, it is a fact that the first pair of human beings to set foot on earth was this very Adam and Eve.

Adam was the first man as well as the first Prophet. The way of God is to select a man as His messenger from amongst human beings themselves in order to send His revelations to mankind. Therefore, God revealed to Adam through an angel the purpose of man's inhabiting the earth. According to this plan, God created a creature in the form of man, upon whom He bestowed freedom. Where the rest of the universe had no choice but to submit to the will of God, it is desirable for man to opt for this divine plan of his own free will.

This plan of divine will is based on two basic principles—monotheism and justice. Monotheism holds man to worshipping one God alone, and not associating anyone or anything in this worship. Justice holds man to adhering completely to ethical principles in dealing with other human beings and refraining from all kinds of injustice and oppression.

Along with this, God informed man that, although he appeared to be free, he was fully accountable to Him. God had a complete record of man's actions. In the eternal life after death God would judge everyone according to this record. One who exercised his freedom wrongly would be thrown into eternal hellfire.

Adam prepared tablets of clay on which he engraved the basic divine teachings, then heated them in a fire, thus preserving this divine guidance for the coming generations. It is believed that these divine teachings were written by Adam in the Syriac language.

Adam died at a ripe old age. For a long period of time his people continued to adhere faithfully to the divine guidance. But later rot began to set in in the people. Idolatry replaced monotheism. People began to adopt the ways of injustice and oppression instead of justice and rectitude. After about one thousand years the perversion became so all pervading that they were completely distanced from the path of the *Shariah* as shown by Adam.

The Reasons for Perversion

What were the reasons for this continued transgression? There were two main reasons; one, political absolutism; another, ignorance about the world of nature.

In ancient times the system of monarchy prevailed everywhere. The kings of those days had adopted an easy strategy for the consolidation of their empire, and that was to apply a complete curb on intellectual freedom. As a result, science could not make any progress in the days of old.

The same was the case with religion. The policy adopted by these kings was not to allow their subjects to follow any religion other than that approved of, by the king. Superstitious religion served their purpose only too well. Therefore, not only did they themselves embrace superstitious religion but they also compelled their subjects to adhere to it. People were denied the right to think freely and opt for any religion other than the official one. This policy of the kings produced the evil of religious persecution. History shows that religious persecution has continued from time immemorial in one form or another.

The other main factor in this connection was ignorance. In ancient times man knew too little about the world and its phenomena. Political absolutism had placed an almost total ban on scientific research. Therefore, all kinds of superstitions regarding natural phenomena made inroads unchecked. It was generally held that the sun, the moon and the stars etc. possessed supernatural powers. Similarly it was believed that the sea, the mountains and other such natural phenomena were endowed with some extraordinary, mysterious power and exercised decisive control over human destiny.

The Problem of Evil

Those who want to interpret human history in the light of predetermined law as is done in the physical world, cannot but meet with failure. While the physical world may be explainable within the framework of predeterminism, the events of the human world are simply not amenable to interpretation in terms of any such law.

Others want to interpret the events of the human world in the context of freedom. But they are not satisfied either, with their interpretation. This is because in the case of human freedom, the suffering experienced in this world has no valid understandable explanation. The failure of both these interpretations is due to the fact that they attempt to explain the whole in the light of a part-which is not at all possible.

The truth is that the right principle by which to interpret human history is neither that of predeterminism nor of freedom. According to Islam, there is only one correct principle to interpret human history and that is the principle of test. Man has been placed in the present world for the purpose of being tested. On the outcome of this test will depend the eternal future of all mankind.

Favourable circumstances were a sine qua non for this test in the world. Predeterminism had to a certain extent to be a feature of these circumstances as a guarantee against any obstacle coming in the way of carrying out man's trial. On the other hand, the element of freedom was also essential in order that the intentions and actions of each individual could be properly judged. For man can be granted the credit for a good deed only on the condition that, despite having the opportunity to indulge in bad deeds, he chooses of his own free will to act virtuously.

If in this world everything had been totally predetermined, the element of trial would have been absent. However the granting of freedom did involve the risk of some people misusing their freedom and misuse it they did. This gave rise to the problem of human suffering which results from evil, yet this suffering, or evil, is a very small price to pay for a very precious thing. According to Islam that person is most precious who leads his life in this world in such a manner that despite facing all sorts of temptations he succeeds in overcoming them. Despite having the power to misuse his freedom, he refrains from doing so. Despite the possibility of leading an unprincipled life, he chooses of his own free will to be a man of principle. To identify such individuals, it is essential that an atmosphere of freedom prevail in the world. This is not possible under any other system.

War: A State Action

In Islam, war is not the prerogative of the individual but of an established government. Only an established government can declare war. In other words, individuals can pray on their own, but they cannot wage wars of their own accord. Only when a war is declared by the ruling government, can the public join in and support it, and not before that. Islam does not sanction individual actions on this issue.

As a general principle, the Quran tells us that, even where an external attack is feared the common man should not act independently, but should take the matter to the ruler then under his guidance take proper counters measures. (4:83)

The Hadith also states that 'the ruler is a shield fighting is done under him, and security is attained through him.'

This clearly shows that the decision to do battle and its planning are the tasks of an established government. The common man can play his role as need be under government orders, and not independently.

This Islamic principle shows that there is no room for non-state warfare, which is what we generally call guerilla war. A guerilla war is fought by individual organizations, not by the State. As far as the state is concerned, if it wants to wage a defensive war against any country it has first-in obedience to the Quran-to issue a proper declaration. Only then can it wage a lawful war (8:58). In Islam, there is only 'declared' war. Therefore, in accordance with this principle, no proxy war in Islam can be lawful.

Most Islamic action are governed by certain conditions. The waging of war is also thus subject to certain principles, one being that, even when a defensive war has been declared by the State, it will be aimed only at the combatants. Targeting non-combatants will be unlawful. The Quran enjoins us not to do battle with those who are not at war. Such people have to be dealt with kindly and equitable. But you are free to do battle with those who are fighting against you. (60:8-9)

If, for instance, a Muslim state is at war with a particular nation, and this war is in conformance with Islamic principles it should still not permit any destructive activities against non-combatants (civilians), as was done on September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington. Similarly in Islamic war, Muslim are not permitted to commit suicidal bombings in order to destroy the enemy. Strapping explosives on to oneself and hurling oneself upon the civilian settlements of even those with whom one is at war, for the purpose of destroying the enemy, and in the process killing oneself deliberately, is totally un-Islamic. This can in no way be termed 'Shahadah' (martyrdom) According to Islam we can get martyred, but we cannot court death (martyrdom) deliberately.

MUHAMMAD

A Prophet For All Humanity

PART TWO - II

The Prophet in Makkah - Part I

There are two main periods of the Prophet Muhammad's life: the Makkah and the Madinah, these names being derived from the towns of Makkah and Madinah. Place names tend to assume historical significance over and above their literal meaning, and Makkah and Madinah are no exceptions. They may originally have been just place names, but now they have become symbolic of the two faces of the Islamic coin - two aspects of the process by which Islam has come to the world. On the one hand, Makkah is symbolic of "da'wah," or calling people to the faith, while, on the other hand, Madinah is symbolic of revolution. One can put this another way and say that Makkah was the place where the "da'wah power" of Islam was first activated, while Madinah was the place where this power actually achieved supremacy. This verse of the Qur'an tells the whole story of both Makkan and Madinan Islam:

Muhammad is God's Messenger. Those who are with him are hard on the unbelievers but merciful to one another. You see them bow and prostrate themselves, seeking the grace of God and His good will. Their marks are on their faces, the traces of their prostrations. Thus they are described in the Torah and in the Gospel: (they are) like the seed which puts forth its shoot and strengthens it, so that it rises stout and firm upon its stalk, delighting the sowers. Though them God seeks to enrage the unbelievers. God has promised those of them who will believe and do good work forgiveness and a rich reward.

The reference to the Torah in this verse is made with regard to the individual qualities of the companions of the Prophet. The reference to the Bible shows their qualities when they came together as a group. Their individual qualities developed in Makkah, whereas their qualities as a community emerged in Madinah.

Biographies of the Prophet usually treat their subject as if he were a person endowed with great magical powers, one who by mysterious means brought the whole of Arabia under his wing. These books read like fairy stories; even events which have no miraculous content have been given a fanciful miraculous interpretation. Take the case of Suhayb ibn Sanan's migration from Makkah to Madinah.

When some Quraysh youths blocked his path, Suhayb pleaded with them: "If I let you have all my property, will you let me go?" They said that they would. Suhayb had a few ounces of silver with him. He gave it all to them and carried on to Madinah. According to a tradition in Bayhaqi, Suhayb said that when the Prophet saw him in Madinah he told Suhayb that his trading, that is, his handing over of his property to the Quraysh, had been very profitable. Suhayb, according to the tradition, was astounded, for no one had arrived in Madinah before him who could have brought the news. "It must have been Gabriel who told you," he said to the Prophet.

But the same event has been related by Ibn Marduyah and Ibn Sa'd. According to them, Suhayb told his own story in these words:

*I carried on until I reached Madinah. When the Prophet heard about my handing over my property to the Quraysh he said: "Suhayb has profited! Suhayb has profited!"*²

The fact that the Prophet led such a simple life means that it is simple for others to follow his example. He was a human being like any other, but his life was a perfect pattern for others. According to al-Bukhari, he used to stumble on the road like anyone else. Indeed, the reason his congregation refused to believe that he was the receiver of divine revelation was the very fact that, to all appearances, the Prophet appeared just like any normal human being:

*You make transactions in the town. You seek a livelihood just as we do.*³

The truth is that the greatness of the Prophet's life lies in its being a human event rather than a far-fetched tale of inimitable miraculous actions. The Prophet was God's humble and very human servant, and, having been chosen by God to spread His message, he was helped by Him at every critical hour. In this sense his success was miraculous, but the Prophet himself was in no way endowed with miraculous powers. It is rather the human aspect of his life which emerges from a study of the Qur'an.

THE BEGINNING OF THE PROPHET'S PUBLIC MISSION

When, at the age of forty, the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation, he reached as any normal human being would in such a situation. He was meditating in the Cave of 'I Iira' at the time. Petrified, he returned home, where his wife Khadijah was waiting for him. Being an impartial judge, she was in a position to view the situation objectively. She was able to see that the Prophet's experience, far from being a bad dream, must have been a sign that he had been chosen by God. "It cannot be," she

said, "God will surely never humiliate you. You are kind to your relatives; you always give the weak a helping hand; you help those who are out of work to stand on their own feet again; you honour guests. When people are in trouble you give them assistance."⁴

The Prophet went about his task in a manner befitting one who was to preach a new message in a society attached to traditional beliefs and customs. He proceeded cautiously, following an entirely natural sequence. He proceeded cautiously, following an entirely natural sequence. At first he had to work in secret. This is how the historian Ibn Kathir describe an incident that occurred at the beginning of the Prophet's mission:

*'Ali, son of Abu Talib and cousin of the Prophet, came into the Prophet's house while he and Khadijah were praying. He asked his cousin what they were about. The Prophet told him that this was God's religion, the path that God had chosen Himself. It was to call people to this path that He had sent His prophets to the world. "Believe in One God," the Prophet said. "He has no partner. Worship Him alone. Forsake the idols Lat and 'Uzza." "I have heard nothing of this nature before today." Ali replied. "I cannot make a decision until i have talked the matter over with my father, Abu Talib." But the Prophet did not want anyone to know about his secret until the time had come for it to be made public. "Ali," he said. "If you are not ready to become a Muslim, keep the matter to yourself." Ali waited for one night, then God made his heart incline towards Islam. He went back to the Prophet early in the morning. "What was it that you were telling me yesterday?" He asked. Bear witness that there is none worthy of being served save God. He is One. He has no partner. Forsake Lat and 'Uzza, and disown all those who are set up as equals with God," Ali did this and became a Muslim. Then, in fear of Abu Talib, he used to come and see the Prophet secretly. Ali kept his Islam a secret; he did not tell anyone about it."*⁵

Even later, when the first Muslims among the tribes of Aws and Khazraj returned to Madinah, they followed the same policy. According to the historian Tabarani, "They returned to their people and invited them, secretly, to embrace Islam."

Throughout his entire public mission, the Prophet was very careful not to take any initiative until he was quite sure that he possessed the necessary resources. 'A'ishah, wife of the Prophet and daughter of Abu Bakr, tells how, when the Prophet had gathered 38 followers around him, Abu Bakr urged him to publicize his mission. Abu Bakr was of the opinion that the prophet and his companions should go out into the open, and public preach Islam. But the Prophet said to him: "No Abu Bakr, we are too

few." The same thing happened in the sixth year of the Prophet's mission, when 'Umar accepted Islam. He protested to the Prophet: "Why should we keep our Islam a secret, when we are right. And why should others be allowed to publicize their faith, when they are in the wrong?" The Prophet gave 'Umar the same reply that he had given Abu Bakr several years earlier: "We are too few, 'Umar." As long as the Prophet remained in Mecca, he continued this cautious posture. Until after the emigration, with the consolidation of Muslim ranks, when the armed Quraysh advanced on Madinah to extirpate the Islam and Muslims then permission was given to Muslims to counter the Quraysh. The first battle fought between the Muslims and their antagonists was the Battle of Badr. "Whoever is successful on this day," the Prophet said as the battle began, "will be successful in times to come." The meaning of the Prophet's remark was that the time of Muslims to take positive initiatives was only when they were in a position to fashion a new future for Islam. If their actions were not likely to produce such results, it was better for them to be patient.

One thing is quite clear from biographies of the Prophet. When the task of public preaching devolved upon him, he became very conscious of the greatness of this task, realizing that it would require his complete and single-minded attention. He hoped that his family would look after him financially so that, freed from having to look for a livelihood, he would be able to concentrate on his preaching work. He called 'Abd al-Muttalib's family together in his own house. There were about thirty family members at that time. The Prophet told them what his true mission in life now was. He asked for their support, so that he would be free to discharge his prophetic duties. This is how Imam Ahmad describes the incident, on the authority of 'A'ishah:

"Banu Muttalib," the Prophet said, "I have been sent to you in particular, and to the whole of mankind in general. Who will swear allegiance to me and become my brother and companion? Who will fulfil my debts and my promises on my behalf? Who will look after my family affairs for me? He will be with me in heaven." Someone spoke up: "Muhammad, you are an ocean. Who can come forward and accept such responsibility?"⁶

The Prophet's own family were not ready to accept responsibility for him. 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's uncle, was financially in a position to look after his nephew. Yet even he remained silent, for fear that this responsibility would devour his wealth. God, however, helped His Prophet, first through the Prophet's wife, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and later on through Abu Bakr, whose wealth saw the Prophet through the years in Madinah.

The Prophet displayed boyish enthusiasm in his efforts to communicate the faith to others. The

historian Ibn Jarir tells, on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn al-'Abbas, how the nobles of the Quraysh had gathered around the Ka'bah one day, and called for the Prophet. He came quickly, thinking that they might be feeling some leanings towards Islam. He was always eager that his people should accept the guidance of Islam. The thought of their being doomed was a great distress to him. It transpired, however, that they had just wanted to pick a quarrel. Acceptance of Islam was the last thing on their minds. The Prophet talked to them at length, then went away in distress. Ibn Hisham takes up the story:

*The Prophet returned to his home sad and disillusioned, for the hopes that he had for his people when they called him had been dashed. He had seen how far people were from accepting his message.*⁷

When the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, lay dying, people came to him and asked him to settle matters between his nephew and themselves before he died. "Take an undertaking from him on our behalf, and one from us on his behalf so that he should have nothing to do with us, nor us with him," they said. Abu Talib called his nephew, and asked him what he wanted of the people. The Prophet replied that he just wanted them to testify that there was none worthy of being served save God, and forsake all other objects of worship. His people, however, were unwilling to accept this. When everyone went away, Abu Talib said to his nephew: "You know, I don't think it was anything very difficult that you asked of them." On hearing his uncle's words, the Prophet's hopes soared, for now perhaps he would accept Islam. "Uncle," he said "then why don't you testify to the oneness of God, so that I may be able to intercede for you on the Day of Judgement?"⁸ The Prophet was sorely disappointed that his uncle never accepted Islam.

The dedication with which the Prophet applied himself to his task was total, all his mental and physical energy being channelled into it. Not only his time, but also his property went into the furtherance of the Islam cause. Before the start of his mission, the Prophet had become quite rich by virtue of his marriage to the wealthy Khadijah. At the beginning of the Makkah period, the Quraysh sent 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah to talk to the Prophet. As Ibn Kathir explains, he soon found himself being won over; (an event which was unfortunately misinterpreted by his kinsmen as being due to the love of the Prophet's wealth):

Afterwards 'Utbah stayed at home and did not go out to see anybody. "Fellow Quraysh," Abu Jahl said, "It seems to me that 'Utbah has become attracted towards Muhammad. He must have been taken by the food that Muhammad offered him. This can only be due to some need of his. Let's go and see him." So off they went. "Utbah," Abu Jahl said, "we have come to see you because we are sure that you have taken a liking to Muhammad and his religion. Look, if you

want we can accumulate enough money to ensure that you will not have to go to him to be fed."
*'Utbah became angry, and swore that he would never speak to Muhammad again!'*⁹

Similarly, Walid ibn Mughirah once came to see the Prophet. When the latter recited some verses of the Qur'an to him, Walid was very impressed by the style of the Book of God. When Abu Jahl heard about this, he went to see Walid, and told him that people would make a collection for him, because he was obviously in need of some money, and had gone to Muhammad for this purpose. The Prophet, then, was financially very well placed when he commenced his mission. But when, after 13 years, he emigrated to Madinah, it was a very different story. He had nothing left, and had to borrow some money from Abu Bakr for the journey.

THE PROPHET'S CALL

Looked at from a logical point of view, the Islamic call consists of certain constant, recurrent factors. It is the same points—the oneness of God, the importance and inevitability of the life after death, the need for people to understand their position as God's servants, and live as such according to the prophetic pattern—which are stressed again and again. When these points come from the tongue of the preacher of God's word, however, they take on the hue of the preacher's own person; he adds an element of individuality to what are basically unvarying themes. This addition means that the message of Islam, far from being a repetition of set texts, is expressed with irresistible vitality and spontaneity. One in meaning, it becomes diverse in the forms it takes. Fixed though its topics are, it becomes impossible to compile a complete list of them. The heart of the preacher of God's word is full of fear of God; it is his ardent desire to bring his audience on to the path of right guidance. He knows that if he can bring God's servants close to God, God will be pleased with him. These factors spur him on in his task. They ensure that his words, far from being repetitive and monotonous, have an inspired air about them. Despite being one in theme, his message becomes varied in tone. The preacher of God's word thinks first and foremost of his congregation. More than anything, he wants them to find right guidance. This means that he makes allowances for the needs of every individual that he is addressing, and casts his words in a mould that will be understandable to them.

No one followed this pattern more completely than the Prophet of Islam. Night and day, he was busy preaching the word of God. But his preaching was far from a bland repetition of certain set speeches. He used to take into consideration the nature of his congregation in formulating his message.

On one occasion, in the early days in Makkah, the Prophet preached Islam to Abu Sufyan and

his wife Hind. This is how he framed his address:

*Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, Hind bint 'Utbah. You are going to die, then you will be raised up. The good will then be admitted into heaven, and the wicked will enter hell. I am telling you the truth.*¹⁰

The historian Ibn Khuzaymah has recorded the following conversation between a member of the Makkah nobility, Hasin, and the Prophet Muhammad, on whom be peace. "Tell me, Hasin," the Prophet said, "how many gods do you worship?" "Seven on earth and one in heaven," Hasin replied. "Whom do you call on when you are in trouble?" the Prophet asked. "The one in heaven," Hasin answered. "And whom do you call on when you have suffered loss of wealth?" the Prophet asked again. "The one in heaven," came the same reply. "He alone answers your prayers," the Prophet said, "Then why do you set up others as His equals?"¹¹

Imam Ahmad has reported, on the authority of Abu Umamah, that a man from a certain tribe came to the Prophet, and asked him what teachings he had brought from God. "That relationships should be strengthened and wrongful killing avoided. Roads should be left open. Idols should be broken. Only one God should be served; no others should be set up with Him as His equals," was the Prophet's reply.

After he had reached Madinah, however, when he sent a formal invitation to the people of Najran, he presented his message in a different manner:

*I call you to serve God rather than men, and to acknowledge the sovereign power of God rather than that of men.*¹²

The Qur'an itself provided a constant and important basis of the Prophet's preaching work. Whenever the Prophet met anybody, he would recite a passage of the Qur'an to him. Often phrases like, "He made mention of Islam, and read some of the Qur'an to them," or "He presented the message of Islam before them, and recited to them a passage of the Qur'an," recurred in traditions concerning the Prophet's preaching mission. The Qur'an possessed extraordinary magnetism for the Arabs. Even some of the direst enemies of Islam used to steal up to the Prophet's house at night, put their ears to the wall, and listen to him reciting the Qur'an. The sublime style of the Qur'an used to have the most profound impact on the Prophet's people. Take the case of Walid ibn Mughirah who once came to the Prophet on behalf of the Quraysh. When the Prophet read him a passage of the Qur'an, Walid was so impressed that he went back to the Quraysh and told them that the Qur'an was literary work of such

unsurpassable excellence that it overshadowed everything else. Recitation of the Qur'an was, in those days, a common method of preaching Islam. When Mus'ab ibn Zubayr was sent to Madinah as a preacher, he used to "talk to people, and recite a passage of the Qur'an to them." That was why people came to know him as "al-Muqri", the reciter of the Qur'an.

During his time in Makkah the Prophet's preaching was always conducted on a refined intellectual level. It was dominated by the lofty literary standard set by the Qur'an. The Prophet's opponents, on the other hand, could offer only abuse and opprobrium in reply. Sensible people in Makkah could not help but come to the conclusion that Muhammad's opponents had nothing concrete to offer in support of their case. According to Ibn Jarir, some of the nobles of the Quraysh planned to call a meeting and talk to the Prophet. Their intention was "to place themselves above reproach as far as he was concerned" that is, to assure him that they had nothing to do with the base tactics being followed by the Prophet's direct enemies.

THE APTITUDE OF THE ARABS

Now we come to the factors that produce the reaction that Islamic preaching evokes. However untiring the efforts of the preacher, and no matter how accurately he presents the true message of Islam, it is more the disposition of his audience that determines whether his call is accepted or not. The character of the Arabs was a valuable factor which contributed towards their acceptance of Islam. They were simple human beings, brought up in simple, natural surroundings. Despite their superficial ignorance and stubbornness, they retained the qualities of their environment. Thirty million square kilometers of desert, the hot, bare hard country in which they lived, was an ideal breeding ground for the most lofty human values. An average Arab had just one source of income-his camel. But if he had guests he would sacrifice this invaluable beast in order to provide them with food. If a victim of oppression took refuge with an Arab in his tent, he knew he had a friend who would give his own life in defence of the wronged. Even plunderers did their looting in a chivalrous manner. If they wanted to snatch clothes and jewelry off a tribe's womenfolk, they would not allow themselves to snatch them off the women's bodies with their own hands: instead, they would tell the women to hand over their valuables, and they themselves would look in the opposite direction, so that they did not catch sight of them while they were taking off their clothes.

It would be misleading to think of the desert Arabs as pure simpletons who knew nothing. They were a highly intelligent, alert people, quick to penetrate to the depths of a matter.

Seven Muslim converts came to the Prophet from a certain tribe. They told him that they had

learnt five things during the time of ignorance that preceded Islam. They would adhere to these principles, they said, unless the Prophet gave them other instructions. The Prophet then asked them what these characteristics that they had inherited from the time of ignorance were. "Thankfulness in times of affluence," they answered, "and patience in times of difficulty. Steadfastness on the field of battle and resignation to fate. We learnt not to rejoice over another's setbacks, even if it was one's own enemy that was afflicted." "These people are intellectuals, men of letters," the Prophet said when he heard this. "They are cast in the mould of prophets. How wonderful their words."¹³

Damad, a practising exorcist belonging to the tribe of Banu Azdashanuah once came to Makkah. People there told him about the Prophet. "He is possessed by an evil spirit," they said. Damad went to see the Prophet, thinking that he might be able to cure him. But when he heard the Prophet's words, his attitude changed. "I have heard soothsayers and conjurors," he said. "I have seen the works of poets. But I have never come across anything of this nature. Give me your hand," he said to the Prophet. "Let me swear allegiance to you." As was his custom, the Prophet did not give a long talk on this occasion. Actually this was all he said:

*Praise be to God. We praise Him and seek help from Him. One whom God guides, no one can send astray, and one whom God sends astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is none worthy of being served save God. He has no equal.*¹⁴

In these few words Damad found a wealth of meaning. "Say that again," he requested the Prophet. "Your words are as deep as the ocean."¹⁵

For an Arab there was no question of any discrepancy between words and deeds. He himself was true to his word, and expected others to be the same. As soon as he comprehended the truth of a matter, he accepted it. According to the Prophet's biographer, Ibn Ishaq, the Banu Sa'd tribe sent Damam ibn Tha'labah to the Prophet on their behalf. He arrived in Madinah, sat his camel down near the gate of the mosque and tied it up. Then he went inside. The Prophet was sitting there with his companions. Damam was a brave and intelligent man. He stood in front of the gathering and asked: "Who among you is the son of 'Abdul Muttalib?" "I am," the Prophet replied. "Muhammad," Damam said, "I am going to ask you a few questions, and am going to be quite severe in my questioning. I hope you won't mind." "Not at all," the Prophet replied. "You can ask what you like." "Will you swear to me by the name of your God and the God of those before you, and the God of those who will come after you, that God has sent you as His Prophet?" By God, yes," the Prophet replied. "Will you swear to me," Damam continued, "by the name of your God, and the God of those before you, and the God of those who will come after you, that God has told you to exhort us to worship Him alone and ascribe no partners to Him; that He has commanded you to tell us to forsake idol worship, and all the things that

our forefathers used to worship?" "By God, yes," the Prophet replied. I ask you to swear to me," Damam said once again, "by the name of your God and the God of those before you, and the God of those who will come after you that has God commanded that we should pray five times a day." Damam then asked about *Zakat* (alms), fasting, Hajj (pilgrimage) and all the other injunctions of Islam, framing each question in the same manner. When he had finished his questioning, and the Prophet had given him the same simple answer to every question, Damam spoke these words:

*I bear witness that there is none worthy of being served save God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God. I shall discharge these obligations, and I shall avoid the things you have prohibited. I shall do no more and no less.*¹⁶

He then mounted his camel and rode away. When he reached his people, he told them what had happened. Before the day was out, all the men and women who had been awaiting his homecoming, had accepted Islam.

There was not a trace of hypocrisy in these people. They knew only acceptance or denial—nothing in between. When they made a promise, they fulfilled it, come what may. No threat of loss of life or property could prevent them from converting their words into actions. Such was the nature of the Arab temperament. Historians have described the speeches of both the Aws and the Khazraj—the two tribes of Madinah—on the occasion of the Second Oath of Allegiance. They have all the lustre which distinguished their race. 'Abbas ibn 'Ubaydah had this to say: "People of Khazraj, do you know what you are committing yourselves to, swearing allegiance to this man? You are committing yourselves to war with men of all races. Think about this. If, when you incur loss of life and property, you are going to send him back to his people, then it is better that you do so now. If you do so later on, it will mean humiliation for you in both this world and the next. But if you think you will be able to keep your promises, however much loss you incur, and however many of your leaders are killed, then take him with you to Madinah. This will be better for you in both this world and the next."

Everyone said in unison that they would take the Prophet with them, no matter what loss of life and property they incurred. "What will we have in return if we keep our word?" They asked the Prophet. "Paradise," he replied. "Hold out your hand to us," they cried out. He extended his hand and accepted their allegiance.¹⁷

These were not mere words on the part of the Ansar; they were words borne out by actions. Even when the Muslims became dominant, they did not demand any political compensation for the sacrifices they had made. They were quite willing to let the Caliphate remain in the hands of the Makkans. They did not seek reward in this world, but were content to leave this world to others and, to look forward to their reward in the next world from God.

THE FOURTH SURAH
AN-NISA (WOMEN)
MEDINA PERIOD
verse 36 to verse 48

36. **AND WORSHIP** God [alone], and do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught beside Him.⁴⁶
 And do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbour from among your own people, and the neighbour who is a stranger,⁴⁷ and the friend by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom you rightfully possess.⁴⁸
 Verily, God does not love any of those who, full of self-conceit, act in a boastful manner;
 37. [nor] those who are niggardly, and bid others to be niggardly, and conceal whatever God has bestowed upon them out of His bounty; and so We have readied shameful suffering for all who thus deny the truth.
38. And [God does not love] those who spend their possessions on others [only] to be seen and praised by men, the while they believe neither in God nor in the Last Day; and he who has Satan for a soul-mate, how evil a soul-mate has he!⁴⁹
39. And what would they have to fear⁵⁰ if they would but believe in God and the Last Day, and spend [in His way] out of what God has granted them as sustenance - since God has indeed full knowledge of them?
40. Verily, God does not wrong [anyone] by as much as an atom's weight; and if there be a good deed, He will multiply it, and will bestow out of His grace⁵¹ a mighty reward.
41. How, then, [will the sinners fare on Judgement Day,] when We shall bring forward witnesses from within every community,⁵² and bring thee [O Prophet] as witness against them?
42. Those who were bent on denying the truth and paid no heed to the Apostle will on that Day wish that the earth would swallow them:⁵³ but they shall not [be able to] conceal from God anything that has happened.
43. O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not attempt to pray while you are in a state of drunkenness,⁵⁴ [but wait] until you know what you are saying; nor yet [while you are] in a state requiring total ablution,⁵⁵ until you have bathed - except if you are travelling [and are unable to do so]. But if you are ill, or are travelling, or have just satisfied a want of nature,⁵⁶ or have cohabited with a woman, and can find no water - than take resort to pure dust, passing [there-with] lightly over your face and you hands.⁵⁷ Behold, God is indeed an absolver of sins, much-

forgiving.

44. ART THOU NOT aware of those who having been granted their share of the divine writ,⁵⁸ now barter it away for error, and want you [too] to lose your way?
45. But God knows best who are your enemies: and none can befriend as God does, and none can give succour as God does.
46. Among those of the Jewish faith there are some who distort the meaning of the [revealed] words, taking them out of their context and saying, [as it were,] "We have heard, but we disobey," and, "Hear without hearkening,"⁵⁹ and, "Hearken thou unto us, [O Muhammad]" - thus making a play with their tongues, and implying that the [true] Faith is false.⁶⁰ And had they but said, "We have heard, and we pay heed," and "Hear [us], and have patience with us," it would indeed have been for their own good, and more upright: but God has rejected them because of their refusal to acknowledge the truth - for it is in but few things that they believe.⁶¹
47. O you who have been granted revelation [aforetime]! Believe in what We have [now] bestowed from on high in confirmation of whatever [of the truth] you already possess, last we efface your hopes and bring them to an end⁶² - just as We rejected those people who broke the Sabbath: for God's will is always done.⁶³
48. VERILY, God does not forgive the ascribing of divinity to aught beside Him, although He forgives any lesser sin⁶⁴ unto whomever He wills: for he who ascribes divinity to aught beside God has indeed contrived an awesome sin.⁶⁵

- 46) The expression *shay'an* (here rendered as "in any way") makes it clear that *shirk* ("the ascribing of divinity to anything beside God") is not confined to a worship of other "deities", but implies also the attribution of divine or quasi-divine powers to persons or objects not regarded as deities: in other words, it embraces also saint-worship, etc.
- 47) I.e., "whether he belongs to your own or to another community". That the expression "your own people" (*dhu 'l-qurba*) refers to the community and not to one's actual relatives is obvious from the fact that "the near of kin" have already been mentioned earlier in this sentence. The Prophet often stressed a believer's moral obligation towards his neighbours, whatever their faith; and his attitude has been summed up in his words, "Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, let him do good unto his neighbour" (Bukhari, Muslim, and other compilations).
- 48) According to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud and other Companions, "the friend by your side" (*as-sahib bi'l-janb*) is one's wife or husband (Tabari). By "those whom you rightfully possess" (lit., "whom your right hands possess") are meant, in this context, slaves of contact, and since the best that can be done to a slave is to free him, the above passage calls, elliptically, for the freeing of slaves (*Manar* V, 94). See also *surah* 2, note 146, as well as 9:60, where the freeing of human beings from bondage is explicitly mentioned as one of the objectives to which *zakah* funds are to be dedicated.
- 49) An allusion to 2:268, where Satan is spoken of as "threatening you with the prospect of poverty and bidding you to be niggardly", the implication being that those who obey him "have Satan for their soul-mate (*qarin*)". For the derivation of this term, see note 24 on 41:25.
- 50) Lit., "what is it that would be upon them". This seems to be a reference to the oft-repeated Qur'anic statement that those who believe in God and live righteously "need have no fear" (*la khawf alayhim* - lit., "no fear [shall be] upon them").
51. Lit., "from Himself" - i.e., far in excess of what the doer of good may have merited.
52. I.e., the earlier apostles, of whom every community or civilization has had a share.
53. Lit., "become level with them". The term "the apostle" is probably used here in its generic sense, and refers to all the apostles who preached God's message at one time or another.
54. The reference to prayer at this place arises from the mention, in the preceding verses, of the Day of Judgement, when man will have to answer before God for what he did during his life in this world: for it is in prayer that man faces God, spiritually, during his earthly life, and reminds himself of his responsibility towards the Creator. As regards the prohibition of attempting to pray "while in a state of drunkenness", some of the commentators assume that this ordinance represented the first stage of the total prohibition of intoxicants, and has been, consequently, "abrogated" by the promulgation of the law of total abstinence from all intoxicants (5:90). However, quite apart from the fact that the doctrine of "abrogation" is entirely untenable (see *surah* 2, note 87), there is no warrant whatever for regarding the above verse as a "first step" which has become redundant, as it were, after total prohibition was ordained. It is, of course, true that the Qur'an forbids the use of intoxicants at *all* times, and not merely at the time of prayer; but since "man has been created weak" (4:28), his lapse from the way of virtue is always a possibility: and it is to prevent him

from adding the sin of praying while in a state of drunkenness to the sin of using intoxicants as such that the above verse was promulgated. Moreover, the expression "while you are in a state of drunkenness (*sukara*)" does not apply exclusively to alcoholic intoxication, since the term *sukr*, in its wider connotation, signifies a state of mental disequilibrium which prevents man from making full use of his intellectual faculties: that is to say, it can apply also to a temporary clouding of the intellect by drugs or giddiness or passion, as well as to the state metaphorically described as "drunk with sleep" - in brief, to any condition in which normal judgement is confused or suspended. And because the Qur'an insists throughout on *consciousness* as an indispensable element in every act of worship, prayer is permitted only when man is in full possession of his mental faculties and "knows what he is saying".

- 55) I.e., after sexual intercourse. The term *junub* (rendered by me as "in a state requiring total ablution") is derived from the verb *janaba*, "he made [a thing] remote", and signifies one's "remoteness" from prayer because of immersion in sexual passion.
- 56) Lit., "if one of you comes from the place in which one satisfies..." etc.
- 57) This symbolic ablution, called *tayammum*, consists in touching the earth, or anything supposed to contain dust, with the palms of one's hands and then passing them lightly over face and hands. Whenever water is not within reach - or cannot be used because of illness - the *tayammum* takes the place of both the total ablution after sexual intercourse (*ghusl*) and the partial ablution before prayers (*wudu'*).
- 58) The people referred to are the followers of the Bible. Thus, after having touched in the preceding verse upon the question of prayer, the Qur'an resumes its cardinal theme: man's responsibility for his actions and, in particular, for the manner in which he responds to the guidance offered to him through God's revelations.
- 59) Cf. 2:39. The figure of speech "hear without hearkening" addressed, as it were, by the Jews to themselves, describes their attitude towards both their own scriptures and the message of the Qur'an.
- 60) Lit., "making a thrust (*ta'n*) against the Faith" - i.e., attributing to it a fundamental defect. The saying "Hearken *thou* unto us" is meant to convey the conviction of the Jews that they had nothing to learn from the teaching propounded by the Prophet Muhammad, and that he should rather defer to *their* views on religious matters. See, in this connection, their assertion, "Our hearts are already full of knowledge", in 2:288.
- 61) See *surah* 2, note 74.
- 62) Lit., "lest We obliterate the faces" - i.e., that towards which one turns, or that which one faces, with expectation ('Abduh in *Munir* V, 144 ff.) - "and bring them back to their ends." It is to be noted that the term *dubur* (of which *adbur* is the plural) does not always signify the "back" of a thing - as most of the translators assume - but often stands for its "last part" or "end" (cf. Lane III, 846).
- 63) This is an allusion to the story of the Sabbath-breakers (lit., "the people of the Sabbath") referred to in 2:65 and fully explained in 7:163-166.
- 64) Lit., "anything below that".